CLAIMS

1. A process for propagating a mutant herpes virus having a mutation in its endogenous HSV VP16 gene or a homologue thereof, which process comprises infecting a cell line with the mutant herpes virus and culturing the cell line,

wherein the cell line comprises a nucleic acid sequence encoding a functional herpes simplex virus (HSV) VP16 polypeptide, or a homologue thereof, operably linked to a control sequence permitting expression of the polypeptide in said cell line; the nucleic acid sequence being (i) capable of complementing the endogenous gene and (ii) unable to undergo homologous recombination with the endogenous gene.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the mutation reduces or abolishes the ability of said endogenous gene to activate viral transcription

3. A process according to claim 2 wherein the functional HSV VP16 homologue is encoded by a herpes virus gene selected from a bovine herpes virus gene and an equine herpes virus gene.

4. A process according to claim 3 in which the herpes virus gene is equine herpes virus 1 gene 12, or the bovine herpes virus gene BTIF.

5. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the control sequence comprises a constitutively active promoter or an inducible promoter.

6. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the mutant herpes virus is a herpes simplex virus (HSV).

7. A process according to claim 6 wherein the HSV is an HSV-1 or HSV-2.

8. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the mutant herpes virus comprises additional mutations which functionally inactivate one or

more additional endogenous genes of said virus and the cell line comprises additional nucleic acid sequences encoding functional herpes virus genes which complement said additional functionally inactive endogenous genes.

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9. A process according to claim 8 wherein said additional nucleic acid sequences encode HSV-1 ICP27 and/or ICP4, or equivalents thereof in HSV-2 or another herpes virus.

10. A process according to claim 9 in which HSV-1 ICP27 or equivalent thereof is driven by the ICP27 promoter and/or in which HSV-1 ICP4 or equivalent thereof is driven by the MMTV LTR promoter.

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11. A process according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising isolating mutant herpes virus from the cultured cell line, and optionally purifying the mutant herpes virus.

12. A process according to claim 11 further comprising the step of formulating the mutant herpes virus as a pharmaceutical composition with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

13. Use of a cell line as defined in any one of claims 1, 3 to 5, 8, 9 or 10 to propagate a mutant herpes virus as defined in any one of claims 1, 2, 6 or 7.

14. A cell line as defined in claim 3.

15. A cell line as defined in claim 4.

16. A cell line as defined in claim 8.

17. A cell line as defined in claim 9.

18. A cell line as defined in claim 10.

19. A cell line comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding a functional herpes simplex virus (HSV) VP16 polypeptide homologue, operably linked to a control sequence permitting expression of the polypeptide in said cell line, which nucleic acid sequence is (i) capable of complementing an HSV VP16 gene and (ii) unable to recombine with the HSV VP16 gene.

20. A cell line according to claim 19 wherein the functional HSV VP16 homologue is encoded by a herpes virus gene selected from a bovine herpes virus gene and an equine herpes virus gene.

21. A cell line according to claim 20 wherein the herpes virus gene is equine herpes virus 1 gene 12, or the bovine herpes virus gene BTIF.

22. A cell line according to claim 19, 20 or 21 wherein the control sequence comprises a constitutively active promoter or an inducible promoter.

23. A cell line according to any one of claims 19 to 22 wherein the cell line comprises additional nucleic acid sequences encoding functional herpes virus genes which complement said additional functionally inactive endogenous genes.

24. A cell line according to claim 23 wherein said additional nucleic acid sequences encode HSV-1 ICP27 and/or ICP4, or equivalents thereof in HSV-2 or another herpes virus.

25. A cell line according to claim 24 wherein HSV-1 ICP27 or equivalent thereof is driven by the ICP27 promoter and/or in which HSV-1 ICP4 or equivalent thereof is driven by the MMTV LTR promoter.

26. A virus obtained by a process according to any one of claims 1 to 11.

27. A pharmaceutical composition obtained by a process according to claim 12.

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